UNITED NATIONS

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Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/ICEF/1992/SR.12
1 May 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

EXECUTIVE BOARD

1992 regular session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 12th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 26 June 1992, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Miss SETH (India)

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This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent to Ms. M. A. Cuna, Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board, room H-12K, UNICEF House, 3 United Nations Plaza, New York.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

PREPARATION FOR FUTURE SESSIONS AND REVIEW OF DOCUMENTATION

1. Mr. EIDHAMMER (Norway) suggested that, since the Board would be unable, at the current session, to review, consolidate and rationalize the documentation to be prepared for its next session, the Bureau at its meeting in September 1992, should consider the agenda and documents that would go before the Board in 1993. A special meeting could then be held to endorse the Bureau's proposals.

2. Mr. MACHIN (United Kingdom) endorsed that suggestion; it would make it possible for the momentum for change to continue between Board sessions.

3. Mrs. SAEZ PUEYO (Observer for Mexico) and Mr. BERENDSEN (Netherlands) said that they, too, supported the suggestion.

4. Mrs. STEWART (United States of America) said that her delegation was encouraged by the discussion on the rationalization of the Board's work that had taken place at the March organizational session. It supported all of the measures recommended in decision 1992/5, since they would help reduce the Board's workload; however, it shared the view of other delegations that more could be done to improve the Board's working methods. The Board's approval of the reports required for the following session would help to ensure that only the most necessary documentation was requested. That, together with a conscious effort on the part of Board members to reduce requests for reports or to take into account the existing reporting cycle for many subjects, would greatly reduce the Board's workload.

5. Her delegation believed that the two-week time-frame for the annual Board session should be respected. The introduction of parallel sessions of the two committees would help improve the organization of the session. Careful planning should ensure that smaller delegations did not suffer excessive hardship. The Secretariat should consider the revised timetable used at the current session when preparing future timetables. Board members, through the Secretariat, should quickly schedule informal discussions of draft decisions once key points of difference were identified. When that had been done at the current session, consensus had been reached more quickly, and the work had proceeded more smoothly. Members should also ensure that draft decisions were concise, clear and provided new guidance to the Secretariat. She reiterated her delegation's suggestion that the agenda item number should be included on the documents themselves and on the status of documents chart.

6. The suggestions made by the Executive Director in the paper entitled "UNICEF Governance" merited serious study and should be reviewed together with the results of discussions on overall United Nations reform scheduled to take place at the sessions of the Economic and Social Council and of the General Assembly.

7. Ms. CORNAZ (Switzerland) said that she supported the proposals just made, adding that, in order to avoid an excessive concentration of items on the agenda, there should be a central theme at each session of the Board that would be considered from various angles. A possible theme for 1993 could be programme viability and the strengthening of national capacity.

8. Mr. WILLIAMS (Secretary of the Board) said that he was not in a position to indicate whether the Board would be able to hold a special meeting while the General Assembly was in session. As to the suggestion made by the representative of Switzerland, the decision would be up to the Board.

9. The suggestion that agenda items should be indicated on all documents had been made in the previous year and had been found very difficult to implement; the Secretariat would look into the matter again.

10. The CHAIRMAN said that he would ask the Secretariat to take note of the comments that had been made when it prepared the agenda for the Board's session in 1993 and to report to the Bureau at its meeting in September 1992.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

11. Mr. GRANT (Executive Director) said that the current session of the Board had sent a reassuring message to the children of the world; essentially, that the momentum to deliver on the promises of 1990 was being sustained. In UNICEF it was being sustained through the approval of the medium-term plan for 1992-1995 and 37 country programmes (including significant levels of supplementary funds which must now be raised) and through the approval of landmark resolutions on Africa; on Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltics and the Commonwealth of Independent States; on follow-up to the World Summit for Children; on children, environment and development; on strengthening national capacities; and on the proposals he had made for United Nations reform. He had been especially pleased that the Board had given explicit support to the Organization of African Unity's upcoming International Donors' Conference on Assistance to African Children.

12. It was worth remembering that during the past two weeks, almost half a million children had died in the developing countries of largely preventable causes. During that same period, UNICEF had continued its work in the field, helping to provide infants with 19 million vaccinations against the six killer diseases of childhood; complete over 4,000 water systems and 26,000 latrines; train roughly 50,000 people in developing countries to strengthen national capacity in various fields; establish in more than a score of additional hospitals the 10 breast-feeding practices enabling them to qualify as being baby-friendly; work with mayors in scores of cities to extend child-focused services and activities along the lines inspired by the important meetings of mayors in Rome and Dakar; and send 220 tonnes of emergency goods to countries around the world, including such hot spots as Mogadishu, Sarajevo and Nagorny Karabakh. National programmes of action continued to be developed; he

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had just received a copy of a decree by the President of the Russian Federation establishing a national programme of action with sweeping reforms to be completed by October 1992.

13. UNICEF staff members often worked under difficult and even dangerous circumstances, and they deserved wholehearted appreciation. They were the ones in whose hands the policies established by the Board came to life. At the same time, the Board should bear in mind the need to improve their working conditions so as to preserve and promote the optimal use of human resources over the long haul.

14. A number of colleagues had recently retired or were about to retire. They were: Victor Soler-Sala, who had spent 34 years with UNICEF, Harold Fleming, a Senior Programme Funding Officer, Dr. Samuel Ofosu-Amaah, one of Africa's most distinguished primary health care specialists, Juan Antonio Lopez-Penela, Dr. J. Peter Greaves, a distinguished nutritionist, Maria Diamanti, UNICEF representative in Kinshasa, and Mukalay Mwilambwe, UNICEF representative in Brazzaville. Teresa Albanez had left to take up the post of Minister of the Family and coordinator of the whole social sector in Venezuela and Mary Racelis would retire in December. They would be succeeded by Marta Mauras and Cole Dodge.

15. He paid tribute to staff members who had died during the previous year, including Bjorn Oldaeus, Dr. Martinka Pumpalova of Bulgaria, killed on mission in Somalia, and Françoise Levesque of Canada. He also noted the passing of First Lady Sally Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Professor Derek Jelliffe and Garth Pettitt, who, although not staff members, had been special friends of UNICEF.

16. The 1991 UNICEF Staff Awards for Outstanding Service had gone to the Bagdad office, under the leadership of Dr. Gianni Murzi, the Somalia office, under the leadership of David Bassiouni, and to Joseph Acar, Ole Boye, Maurice Dardas, and Rhonwen Searle.

17. UNICEF had been given a mandate to sustain its programmes and advocacy for the long term. Its coordination with other agencies had been recognized, along with its contribution to the system-wide emergency response capability. Tasks for the future included completion of national programmes of action, and in turn, their translation into local action. The private sector, non-governmental organizations, civic groups and religious and professional associations among many others, must be integrally involved in the process. Governments must ensure the minimal resources necessary to fulfil their national programmes for their own children, not necessarily through additional funding, but surely through better priorities in budget allocation. Aid administration in donor countries must focus on support to developing countries to meet the goals for the year 2000. Again, major additional funding was not necessarily required, but resources must be redirected to the highest priority human needs. Raising the level of bilateral assistance allocated to human priorities from the current level of 6.5 per cent of the

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total to 20 per cent over the next several years would cover approximately two thirds of the additional external assistance estimated to be required annually in order to achieve the World Summit goals for the 1990s.

18. Without a clear shift towards increasing allocations for priority human needs, the promises of the 1990s would be hollow indeed. If momentum could be sustained, not only would children benefit, but, through linkage with development, population and environment, a major contribution would be made to crisis prevention which the Secretary-General had made one of his top priorities.

19. The CHAIRMAN said that, during the session, the Executive Board had reaffirmed its commitment to the world's children and had discovered its commitment to women. Nearly one third of funds allocated was going to women beneficiaries, and the discussions on women's development had been extremely useful. The attention paid to family planning and population control was also welcome.

20. As a result of the lengthy discussion of health-related issues and education for development, consensus had been reached on sustainability of programmes and on the next steps in the children's vaccine initiative. The Board had also expressed its concern over the rising prices of the vaccines which would be required in order to sustain achievements in child immunization and to achieve the goals for the 1990s.

21. The Executive Board had expressed its solidarity with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic States and the Commonwealth of Independent States, while reaffirming its priority concern for developing countries. It had also reaffirmed its support for the Bamako Initiative and the responsibility of developed countries for Africa, where the growing needs of children and women were of great concern to all.

22. She thanked the Reference Group, which had worked hard to deliver the new budget format. Questions concerning global funds and office accommodation also had been resolved to the satisfaction of all.

23. During her term of office, she had gained insight into the working of UNICEF and into the state of the world's children. Her visit to Namibia had been particularly traumatic, since it had brought her face to face with the shocking after-effects of apartheid.

CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

24. There being no other business, the Chairman declared the 1992 session of the UNICEF Executive Board closed.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.